

VZCZCXRO9301
PP RUEHFL RUEHNP
DE RUEHRO #1320/01 3041642
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 301642Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1082
INFO RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9622
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3260
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 3416
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2976
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 001320

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE, EUR/RPM, PM/PPA, L/PM
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISP
JCS FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: DECL: UNTIL PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: AFRICOM COMPONENT COMMANDS: HOST NATION
NOTIFICATION (HNN) COMPLETED BUT ITALY WANTS DELAYED
ANNOUNCEMENT

REF: A. STATE 80262
[1](#)B. ROME 944
[1](#)C. ROME 945

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission, Elizabeth Dibble. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On October 14 Post completed an exchange of Diplomatic Notes with the GOI confirming Italy's willingness to host the USAFRICOM Army and Navy Component Commands at Vicenza and Naples, thereby concluding the Host Nation Notification process. However, the GOI has asked that Post delay the public announcement because of ongoing political tensions in the Vicenza area stemming from the Mayor's October 5 unofficial referendum on the Dal Molin base expansion project. FM Frattini and PM Berlusconi's Chief Adviser Letta have confirmed to the Ambassador their willingness to make a joint public announcement of the changes in Rome in order not to avoid linkage with the ongoing Dal Molin issues. Embassy Rome is working to develop a concrete date and scenario for the public announcement and will report septel. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On October 1, 2008, POLMIL Counselor and Chief ODC presented a revised Diplomatic Note dated 1 October 08 to Italian MFA Director for Political-Military Affairs Massimo Marotti notifying the GOI of the planned establishment of service component headquarters for U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), by adding new responsibilities to SETAF (Southern European Task Force) in Vicenza as the Army component command and CNE (Commander, Naval Forces Europe) in Naples as the Navy component command. The revised DIPNOTE was the product of an ongoing US-IT AFRICOM Working Group chaired on the GOI side by Minister Marotti and POLMIL Counselor on the U.S. side. The 1 Oct 08 DIPNOTE, which had also been coordinated with AFRICOM, EUCOM, SETAF, CNE, and OSD, had been revised to take into account the GOI's legal opinion that to be permissible under the U.S.-Italy Bilateral Infrastructure Agreement (BIA), the U.S. proposal must include a reference to SETAF's continuing NATO role under the new arrangement.

[1](#)3. (C) On October 14, 2008 Minister Marotti/MFA presented the GOI/MFA DIPNOTE response to the POLMIL Counselor. The DIPNOTE took "positive note of the specific delineations contained" in the U.S. DIPNOTE "with regard to the additional responsibilities that the U.S. plans to assign to the Commands at Vicenza and Naples by 1 October 2009 in view of the declaration of the U.S. Africa Command as a unified

command." The DIPNOTE also stated that the GOI was available to amend or negotiate any basing technical agreements (TAs), if required. POLMIL Counselor confirmed on October 14 with MFA POC that the negotiation between the U.S. and GOI could be considered complete and the assignment of the AFRICOM responsibilities to SETAF and CNE could occur right away, but asked Embassy Rome to work implementing details and notice with the Italian Defense General Staff.

14. (C) On October 20, 2008, ODC received telephonic notice from IDGS that the exchange of DIPNOTES completed on October 14, 2008 was sufficient to consider HNN complete. In addition, IDGS wants to coordinate any public release of the agreement well in advance, preferring to keep it quiet for some months as a result of the ongoing political tensions in the Vicenza area stemming from the Mayor's October 5 unofficial referendum on the Dal Molin base expansion project. IDGS said that minor changes might be required to the Vicenza TA (completed earlier this year) and that we should work to make any changes that may be required to include CNE as the Navy Component Command in the Napoli TA, which is still being negotiated.

15. (C) On October 21 the Ambassador met with Gianni Letta, PM Berlusconi's Chief Adviser, and FM Franco Frattini, both of whom were favorable to a joint announcement in late November. Post is currently working with the GOI to lock in a date and develop a scenario for a joint political announcement in late November or early December and will coordinate those events closely with AFRICOM. In order not to draw public attention to the Dal Molin question, post

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recommends that the announcement be made in Rome by Foreign Minister Frattini and an appropriate USG interlocutor. We appreciate AFRICOM's patience as this issue has played out. We anticipate no issues regarding CNE Naples, which is non-controversial. Post will coordinate the timing of the announcement as well as press guidance with AFRICOM, SETAF and CNE.

16. (C) Begin Text of U.S. Diplomatic Note No. 08-00825 to GOI:

The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy and has the honor, in the spirit and within the framework of NATO collaboration, to identify the planned establishment of service component headquarters for U.S. Africa Command USAFRICOM by adding new responsibilities to headquarters already present in Italy, consistent with current treaties and bilateral and international arrangements in force, specifically the 1949 NATO Treaty, the 1951 NATO Status of Forces Agreement, (SOFA), and the 1954 Bilateral Infrastructure Agreement (BIA),

Headquarters, USAFRICOM, currently in Stuttgart, German, will be declared a Unified Command on October 1, 2008. Identifying and establishing USAFRICOM service Army and Navy component headquarters by October 1, 2009 are essential elements in supporting the activities of the command. The USAFRICOM Army and Navy service component headquarters will consist primarily of staff personnel, not assigned rotational operational forces. However, in any case, the possible employment of the above operational headquarters will be submitted to the consent and limitations already established by the treaties and agreements in force.

The Southern European Task Force (SETAF) in Vicenza plans to assume the duties of USAFRICOM Army component Headquarters in addition to retaining its NATO supporting role and accordingly will continue to be available for use in NATO missions whenever required. These additional tasks are part of the natural progression of continuing efforts to realign global defense posture. This adaptation supports shared security interests in Africa and Alliance programs, such as the Mediterranean Dialogue.

SETAF's manpower will not exceed the overall limit of personnel agreed to in the Vicenza TA. This includes retention of the 14 Italian officers currently in the headquarters. Commander, SETAF, will remain a member of the US-IT Joint Military Commission as the senior U.S. Army officer in Italy.

The U.S. Navy plans to dual hat Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe as the naval component commander for both the U.S. European Command and the U.S. Africa Command. Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe will continue to maintain his role as Commander, Joint Forces Command Naples (NATO). This additional command relationship will not change the U.S. Navy component's mission status since it will continue to conduct its current NATO operations that include Africa-related responsibilities.

We assure our full availability to negotiate any technical arrangements in the appropriate fora, as necessary.

In order to give full visibility to the new USAFRICOM structure, we note that the overall headquarters, as well as the Air Force component command, are located in Germany within existing U.S. structures and commands.

The Embassy of the United States of America takes this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic the assurance of its highest consideration.

Embassy of the United States of America, Rome, October 1, 2008

17. (C) Begin Text of Embassy translation of GOI Diplomatic Note number 360899:

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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents its compliments to the U.S. Embassy and has the honor to refer to the U.S. Note Verbale no. 08-080025 dated 1 October 2008, dealing with the plan of reorganization of the Commands present in Italy, in the framework of the multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements in force.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken positive note of the specific delineations contained therein with regard to the additional responsibilities that the U.S. plans to assign to the Commands at Vicenza and Naples by 1 October 2009 in view of the declaration of the U.S. Africa Command as a unified command.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs assures the availability of the Italian authorities to negotiate together any technical accords that might become necessary in view of this timeline.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the U.S. assurances of its highest consideration.

Rome, 14 October, 2008

End text of diplomatic note.
SPOGLI